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# *The MCA Advisory*

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*The Newsletter of Medal Collectors of America*

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**Volume 13 Number 3**

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## **Calendar for 2010**

August 12<sup>th</sup> Club meeting 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at  
Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston. Anne  
Bentley and John Adams to speak

**What's New on Our Website!**

**CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE EVERY MONTH**



## From the Editor

We have lacked “Betts” material for some number of issues, but now our cup runneth over. Ye editor has contributed a piece on a rare Rodney medal that is not listed in Betts and moreover, that brings to mind another dozen Rodney medals not listed in Betts. David Menchell will return to our pages in the April issue with a blockbuster of an article on medals commemorating the Peace of Breda (1667). This treaty was extremely important in the development of colonial affairs, such that all Breda medals bear inclusion in a Betts revision.

Frances Gardiner Davenport compiled a four volume work that provides English translations for all of the major European treaties between (1455) and (1815). It was John J. Ford, Jr. who coined the phrase “Davenport medals,” by which he meant medals commemorating treaties that had material relevance to the Western Hemisphere. A list of such treaties would include:

- 1596 – Triple Alliance
- 1609 – Spain and United Netherlands
- 1648 – Treaty of Munster
- 1654 – Treaty of Westminster
- 1667 – Peace of Breda
- 1668 – Triple Alliance
- 1678-1679 – Treaty of Nymegen
- 1697 – Peace of Ryswick
- 1713 – Peace of Utrecht
- 1748 – Peace of Aix-la-chapelle

Hopefully, members will be inspired to run to their “van Loon” or to their Pax in Nummis to give us an inkling of the riches that lie in wait.

## President’s Message...

### What is a Medal? (by John M. Sallay)

Fair warning – I’m not going to attempt to answer this question here. Rather I’d like to tee up a discussion, or maybe even a debate. Some of you may wish to express your own views in the pages of The Advisory in the next few issues. Perhaps we can continue the discussion in person at our August meeting in Boston.

The question has come up a couple of times over the last month or so. I recently had an e-mail from a collector looking for “correct nomenclature for what the true numismatic medals are called...round, metallic (like a disc, and shaped like a coin or a token); though it can have a small loop-link on top, but that is it in terms of shape and structure; and regardless whatsoever of what the medal is issued on behalf...[not] irregular shaped (or at least non-circular), or made up of several independent pieces adhered together...”

Separately, you may have seen the item by David Schenkman in the January issue of The Numismatist (page 55) about the Admiral Dewey medal that had a hanger and ribbon and therefore was not a “so-called dollar”, even though the exact same item without the ribbon would be collected as such. I agree with what he politely implied, which is that this notion is somewhat absurd. Individual collectors should collect whatever they want to collect. But really, how could any serious collector pass up a better, more complete collectible object just because it is more complete and original?

Many books and articles have taken a crack at this question. The best example I can remember is the first chapter of Chris Eimer’s book “An Introduction to Commemorative Medals”, entitled “What is a medal?” – very much worth reading or even re-reading. In his recorded MCA Oral History interview, available on our website, Dick Johnson expressed his very firm views on the definition of a medal. But I’m not sure we’ve completely nailed it.

So here are a few questions to consider:

Shape – Does it matter if it is perfectly circular? What about oval (e.g., some Indian Peace

Medals)? If oval, why not other successively non-round shapes, such as many modern art medals or other non-round shapes such as many early American hand-engraved award medals? If only perfectly round, what about something donut shaped?

Composition – Does it have to be made of metal, since after all, the dictionary definition and origin of the word “medal” imply they are closely related? What about porcelain or other ceramics (Nini and Wedgewood medallions), wood (which was sometimes stuck into medal-like objects), Bois Durci, hard rubber, or any number of other materials? What if something everyone would agree is a “medal” is inherently attached to or imbedded in something else (e.g., a wooden stand, the top of a jewelry box, a block of Lucite, etc.)?

Manufacturing Method – We tend to think of medals as being struck or perhaps cast, but what about items created by engraving, electrotyping (e.g., the Declaration of Independence and Waterloo medals), repousse (Christ’s Hospital Bluecoat Boy medal) or recently by more exotic techniques (e.g., laser) or combinations of various techniques? What if it started as a coin and was shaved down or engraved to be made into an award medal?

Hanger or other Accoutrements – We’d probably agree that a medal with a small hole is still a medal, but what if it has a ring? What if that ring is attached to a ribbon or hanger with a pin? What if the pin is soldered onto the back? What if the item was originally made to be a pin? What if the thing really looks like a medal but was originally, inherently a decorative element of a larger item like a silver tray or trophy?

Issuer and/or Reason for Issue – Our bylaws and website refer to art and historical medals, but what about prize medals, advertising items, souvenirs, pieces of decoration or jewelry, or daily usage items such as game pieces. If you saw a struck, round coin-like object with the portrait of a monarch on the obverse and some historical scene on the reverse, that looked exactly like an historical medal, but then someone told you it was a game piece, would that change your answer?

You can keep asking questions to push the edge of the envelope. On one hand, you could throw up your hands and say that only struck or cast,

circular items made of metal, about the size of a coin and only made for certain purposes are medals. Or, on the other hand, you can keep expanding the definition until you get all the way to something that is obviously not a medal, like a ribbon. Maybe this suggests that definitions can sometimes be blurry rather than precise.

But if we’re the Medal Collectors of America, what exactly are we collectors of?

## **Admiral Rodney Medal--Not in Betts** (by John W. Adams)

Milford Haven has this to say about the event being commemorated by the medal depicted below:

“On April 12, 1782, Admiral Sir George Rodney with 36 ships of the line attacked and completely defeated the French fleet of similar strength off the island of Dominica in the West Indies. On this occasion, the British Admiral developed an entirely new system of tactics, in breaking through the hostile line in three places himself leading the central attack with the Formidable, 90. The French Commander-in-Chief, Comte de Grasse, in his flagship the Ville de Paris, 120, the finest man-of-war afloat, was taken prisoner and four other ships captured. Rodney was raised to the peerage for these services, but it was thought, especially in the Navy, that if had displayed greater energy in immediately following up his success, he could have inflicted still greater losses on the enemy.”<sup>1</sup>

The medal depicted above was lot 4714 in Stacks Americana Sale of January 26-27, 2010. The only other specimen recorded is in the British Museum. This extreme rarity explains, no doubt, why the piece was not described by Betts, as well as why it was lacking in Ford. It is listed in British Historical Medals as #243 as well as in Milford Haven as #390.

The last campaign of Admiral Rodney’s naval career was marked by three signal victories: Gibraltar (1780), St. Eustatia (1781), and Dominica (1782). Gibraltar is, of course, beyond the

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<sup>1</sup> Milford Haven, British Naval Medals, p. 198.

geographic reach of “Betts.” The capture of St. Eustatia, along with 150 Dutch ships and a cornucopia of stores on their way to Washington’s army is marked by Betts as his number 579 and 580.

Milford Haven lists 9 varieties of the St. Eustatia medal. John J. Ford, Jr. had five in his collection;<sup>2</sup> this writer owns ten. If Betts is to be revised, the authors will have to decide how many varieties to include. Were listings given to them all, some future writer might be inspired to do a specialized study. In any event, collectors would be provided with a swath of inexpensive targets, the study of which would enrich ones understanding of commercial and diplomatic aspects of the Revolutionary War.

Milford Haven lists but four varieties of the 1782 Rodney medal, all of which—including the subject at hand—appear to be quite rare. The battle of Yorktown had been lost by the British in 1781 such that even the signal event of capturing the

enemy’s flagship was perhaps considered but a sidebar. Sidebar or not, it is clear that the Rodney medals belong in Betts and that Rodney himself should be considered a more worthy opponent than has hitherto been the case.

Obverse



**Legend:** S<sup>R</sup> · Geo. B (interrupted by hat) RODNEY. |  
Below: PERFIDIAE ULTOR (Avenger of treachery)

35.2mm  
AE  
R-8  
19.82gms  
White Metal

Reverse



**Legend:** IN THE GLORIOUS VICTORY/OVER DE GRASSE 12 APRIL 1782 | Above, FRENCH INSULTS REVENG 'D & BRITAIN'S HONOR'S / RECOVER'D BY THE BRAVERY OF RODNEY

<sup>2</sup> Ford XIV, May 23, 2006, Lots 236-240.

## Sacrificing Quality vs. Lowering Standards (by Lev Tsitrin)

Recent issues of the Advisory featured some excellent thoughts on good medallic design; and while the criteria suggested by Messrs Shagin and Muhl are unquestionably helpful in judging artistic quality of a piece (and offer good guidance for an artist embarking on creating a new piece), their analysis does not address a different problem – the one that faces a purchaser of an older cast medal. “Is this a satisfactory example?” is a question he or she has to ask.

While pertaining to the quest of artistic quality, this is a somewhat different question than that discussed in the above-referred articles. Old medals that are around today are, to a great extent, after-casts – that is, not the examples produced by the original artist for the original patron, but casts taken from the originals later in time – years and, for that matter, centuries later. When are they acceptable, and when not?

As one who finds himself temperamentally un-inclined to sticking to a straight and narrow path of admitting only strictly original, superb-quality pieces (and, in purely monetary terms, unable to do so), I find this question fascinating. Not to say that excellent advice from experienced collectors is lacking. The preface to the Sigmund Morgenroth collection of Renaissance medals and plaquettes advises a collector to be satisfied “with a ‘good’ specimen without asking many questions;” and Dr. Stephen Scher, in his indispensable “Connoisseurship of the Medal” (published in issue 23, 1993 of *The Medal*) articulates the way to tell such “good” specimens (which, incidentally, entails asking a good many questions indeed.)

And yet, my question is rather different. For in several instances I knew for a fact that a medal in question was definitely *not* a “good” example, yet I still wanted it – because to me, it just looked good. Is that acceptable?

One serious objection to this mode of collecting (apart from the obvious folly of “wasting” money on a “poor” piece where one should “invest” in a “good” one) that was offered in conversation by a very prominent expert in the field of the Renaissance medal – is that such pieces do not represent the artist’s intentions, and, therefore, are artistically beyond the pale. This, however, is not a convincing argument – for several reasons. First of all, respect for an artist as a final arbiter of what is artistically valid and what is not is anachronistic. Marcel Duchamp could get away with exhibiting a urinal and declaring it a work of art only because he lived in the twentieth century. Michelangelo, who worked in the sixteenth, would not have been able to pull this off. Back then, it was the patron who decided what was worthwhile and what wasn’t; the beauty was in the eye of the person who commissioned the art, not that of the artist. Only that was admired which was made well. Back then, the work bespoke the artist, not the other way around as it is nowadays. And since we are talking here of the old pieces, it is the mentality of those times that should apply in our judgment, not the present-day one.

Second of all, in actuality no one cares about old artists’ intentions – neither the collectors, nor the museums, nor, for that matter, the artists themselves. A striking case in point is Rembrandt’s etched portrait of Dr. Ephraim Bonus: the doctor stands in a staircase, his right hand resting on a banister, a ring with a large diamond on his finger. As Rembrandt works on his printing press, printing one impression after another, he notices something odd as he peels off the third one from the copper plate – the diamond is coming off black. “Darn it!” – quoth he (in the original Dutch of course) – “Darn it! This is not in accordance with my artistic intentions! The diamond should be white, not black!” He rushes to his workbench, grabs a burnisher and polishes the burr off the plate where the diamond is. “Now, that’s good!” we hear him say as the next, artistically improved (and



approved), impression showing the diamond shining with white light is off his press.

Now, what happened to three bad impressions that were not in accordance with Rembrandt's artistic intentions? Did Rembrandt, in a fiery fit of fine artistic fury, rip them to pieces? Or did he, as a properly phlegmatic, practical Dutchman use them to wrap herrings in? None of the above. Not only did they survive, but they kept changing hands at enormous sums – many times the prices commanded by those impressions which were fully in accordance with Rembrandt's artistic intentions – until they came to rest in the world's most prestigious public collections. It would be interesting to suggest to the curators of print rooms of the British Museum, the Rothschild collection of the Louvre, and the Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum to discard their "black-ring" impressions of Dr. Bonus, along with other suchlike unapproved states of Rembrandt's etchings as unworthy of such fine institutions, and to proudly display only the "artist-approved," final states. I suspect we would hear some uncharacteristically energetic language. Artist's intentions? Who cares!

Concerns for "artist's intentions" disposed of, let us see how an obviously *not* good example of a medal could be found worthwhile. Consider, for instance, this cast of the obverse of Niccolo Fiorentino's medal of Nonnina Strozzi (Hill 957). Not only is it merely uniface while the original is two-sided; but the lettering is weak and watery instead of standing up square and sharp; and, confirming what is obvious via this initial observation, the diameter is a mere 86 mm to the requisite 90-91. On top of that, two bronze screw bolts are soldered to the reverse; and the edge, at 6 o'clock, has stamped into it either a foundry or a collector mark which seem to read something like "HORWITZ" and appears to be struck over another, much shorter mark. And as if this was not enough, the after-caster, pitying the lady's lack of jewelry, got into a generous mood and added some pearls to her cap, necklace, and the string from which the "cameo of a laureate

head right," as we are informed by Hill (you won't be able to see *that* in this cast) is suspended. Well-intentioned, but not well-performed: the pearls are not of uniform size, and are far too few and far too loose to make any sense – were it an actual necklace, they would all slide down, leaving most of the string bald. And to top it all, the good fellow failed to notice that the string runs on her left hand-side too, and added no pearls there, creating a rather asymmetric, and altogether ridiculous piece of jewelry. And he altered her dress, adding an extra seam which runs to the bottom of the said cameo. (He meant well, and is forgiven).



While there can be no doubt that the piece is *not* "good," there are two reasons why it is perfectly acceptable – one reason having to do with this piece itself, another with qualities of a the properly "good" example (though it appears from the entry in Hill that there are no contemporary casts – of the three he lists, the London and the Berlin one (illustrated here from a plate in volume 5 of *Berliner Numismatische Forshungen – Die Italianishen Medaillen dr Renaissance und des Barock*), he says are not contemporary, and illustrates the cast in Florence – but a quick comparison of a picture in Pollard's catalog to the Berlin one reveals that the Florence and the Berlin medals were cast from the same prototype, if not in the

same mold – the identical size and the identical mold crack marks on both the obverse and the reverse, caused apparently by a knock on the right side of the locked mould before the metal was poured, make that unmistakably clear). As far as this piece is concerned, what is essential *is* there – the outline of the profile is clear and sharp; the glance is alert; the portrait proper is entirely satisfactory, dominating as it does the circle of the medal. And how much, other the portrait itself, is good in the “good” piece? The reverse is, if not outright ugly, is less than well-modeled; ditto the lettering – ill-spaced, ill-executed. If the artist focused on the portrait only, doing it really well, while not caring one straw for the reverse and for the lettering – why would I? All that matters in this medal – the portrait – is well-preserved and present in this cast. Hence, as far as I am concerned, the piece is all right – thought unquestionably *not* “good.”



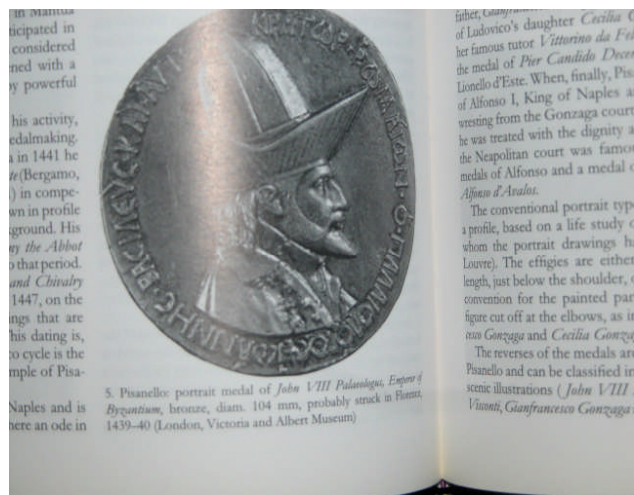
(It is worth noting, in a “by-the-way” way, that this medal is another clear-cut example of an artist’s disregard for “artist’s intentions.” Did Niccolo really decide, when he got the commission from Nonnina’s husband, “my artistic intention is this: the portrait should be done well, but the lettering should be ill-spaced, and the reverse ugly”? I suspect he did not – he wanted the piece to be elegant through

and through – nice portrait, nice lettering, nice reverse. It did not work out that way though, the final product being not in line with the “artist’s intentions.” It didn’t bother him – nor, again, should it bother us. And as a second “by-the-way,” this sloppiness perhaps explains the high productivity of the artist. Graham Pollard observed, in his entry on Niccolo in The Currency of Fame, “A total of 148 medals have been either attributed to him or identified as related to his style. ... For an Italian medalist of the fifteenth century this is an absurdly large group.” But what’s so absurd about this number? In the entry on the medal of Pietro Bembo by an unknown artist, the very same Currency of Fame tells us that Benvenuto Cellini made a wax model for the portrait side of his own Bembo medal which took just a two-hour-long sitting. Now do your own math. If only nominal amount of care (and therefore time) is bestowed on lettering and the reverse – a la Niccolo Fiorentino – then mold-making and casting are the only other time-consuming tasks. So why be surprised that Niccolo was able to satisfy so many patrons’ wish to be immortalized in bronze? Even if he made just one medal a week, it would have taken him a mere three years to complete the medals ascribed to him. Clearly, it was the number of patrons, rather than the difficulty of the task at hand, that limited his oeuvre. Eventually, they numbered to around 148. Isn’t that all there is to it?

But getting back to the question of acceptability of “bad” examples of a medal, consider this example of the posthumously-produced medal of Cosimo de’ Medici commemorating him as “Pater Patriae,” the father of his fatherland. Recognizable at a glance as an after-cast – an extra raised circle near the edge betrays its descent from a smaller example, while extreme thickness of the flan (close to 5 mm) and the very extensive, meticulous, slanted filing of the edge suggests that the casting was not contemporary, while comparison with a photo of a fine example in the Kress collection shows disappearance of



wrinkles on the brow and around eyes, of details of sagging skin on his cheeks and neck, of the outline of the pupil of the eye – and yet, despite the missing details, the powerful presence of an introspective, wise, crafty, old man is, somehow, still there. The profile, although reduced to a near-silhouette, is perfectly sharp, and the brooding expression is caught to perfection. And then, one wonders what is a proper way to commemoratively depict a person who has passed out of this life and into the memory and the legend of a “Pater Patriae.” Should such a posthumous depiction be a detailed, warts-and-all, police mug shot made at a particular moment? Or should it be an idealized portrait, the broad summary of facial features that smoothes out the details observed at the moment of the sitting for the sake of a generalized statement on the man’s character and on his impact on the world? If we accept the latter, then “the artist’s intention” ought to have been to produce a look present in the late after-cast, rather than the original; the after-cast is then closer to the proper “artist’s intention” than what the artist (whose identity is debated) had actually produced. It is, therefore, perfectly legit – at least for me.



(And, on a purely technical note, this medal confirms Dr. Scher’s warning in his above-mentioned article on medal connoisseurship that medal’s diameter taken

alone “has serious limitations” in determining the after-cast: in this one, diameter of the inner circle that came from the edge of the medal from which this cast was taken, is a respectable 76 mm (while the Kress example is 78, most other examples listed by Hill are 76 or 77; and the example in Florence which he describes as “good” measures a mere 72). But despite its reasonable diameter, this piece is clearly an after-cast.)

And finally, while on the subject of connoisseurship, this obviously very recent cast of the obverse of medal of John Paleologus, emperor of Byzantium, originally made by Pisanello when the emperor came to Italy in search of alliances to help him repel the Moslems from Byzantium and keep the Ottomans from the gates of Constantinople, offers a highly instructive cautionary tale. I bought it both because I wanted to have at least some version of the piece that created a new art form, that of the cast medal, and because it was a reminder, in our post-9/11 world, that history is not just words in a book but that some threats, while dormant for a while, do not really go away.



When viewed on the screen, the lettering looked straight and sharp, and the portrait reasonably good; so deciding that it was cast from a good example, and therefore

was as close to a nice piece as I was ever likely to get, I ordered it.

The actual piece turned out not to be too sharply defined (which was to be expected in an after-cast), and had a somewhat spiky, rather than smooth surface; but what really surprised me was that, going clockwise from about 8 to 4 o'clock it was, all things considered, rather all right; but from 4 to 8 it was anything but. There were doubled lines in the lettering; extra buttons on the emperor's kaftan; and something was off with the tip of his nose and his lips. There could be only one explanation for this: when the medal that was used as a model was being removed from the mould, its lower part slipped a bit, slightly shifting and dipping back into the wet sand of the mould, thus producing ghost lines in lettering, extra buttons, lengthening the tip of John's nose, and elongating his lips, making them stretched as if for a kiss. Well, things happen, so I let the matter slip – until I looked up the medal in Hill (his number 19). That was a shock, for lo and behold! The piece he illustrated was messed up in the exact same way! However, Hill's are photos of plaster casts, not of the medals themselves (back in the 1920s and 30s, photographic equipment was bulky and very expensive, and Hill could not afford to illustrate his Corpus with photos of actual medals.) But now at least I knew the exact origin of my piece – someone made a bronze cast of the plaster cast used by Hill; and whoever made the plaster cast in the Victoria and Albert museum (for it was the V&A example that Hill illustrated) was not careful enough. So far so good – until, for some reason, I wanted to see what the latest and greatest art encyclopedia – a massive 30-some-volume "Dictionary of Art" published by Grove has to say about Pisanello. The section on his medal-making authored by Pollard was illustrated – guess what! – with the actual picture of the V&A example of the Paleologus medal (captioned as "struck" in Florence through editorial oversight). And this one had every "4 to 8 problem" I saw in my piece!

Wherein lies a lesson in connoisseurship, for the cast of connoisseurs linked to the V&A example of this medal was anything but unremarkable. First (so far as I know) comes George Salting, the man of enormous wealth and exquisite taste who did nothing in life but collect objects of art, buying, as per the contemporary account, "nothing but the best and the rarest," renaissance small bronzes being one of his specialties. After his death in 1909, in accordance with his bequest they passed to the nation, the bronzes going to the V&A.

The reputation for unmatched quality of Salting pieces may have caused Hill, the greatest connoisseur of the medal at the turn of the century, to choose the V&A example for illustration in his Corpus as the best example of this medal, even though he already used a superlative British Museum example to illustrate his 1905 monograph on Pisanello. And then, Hill's successor in the field of medal connoisseurship, Graham Pollard, fell into the same trap and chose the V&A piece to represent Pisanello's achievement in medal-making to the non-specialist public that is the user of the Grove Dictionary of Art. They all must have been so mesmerized by the pedigree (Salting himself included, for he may have gotten it from a highly distinguished Spitzer collection) that they forgot to look at the medal itself, and so did not notice that it was a very poor-quality example, fit perhaps for a small-fry collector who has little hope of getting a better example, but not to a whale of a collector that was George Salting. Not that their logic was at fault: since Salting had impeccable taste and the medal came from Salting, it was perfectly logical that this was an impeccable piece. And yet they all were wrong. That such a distinguished group of connoisseurs as Salting, Hill and Pollard could all fall victim to groupthink is bizarre, yet does have an educational value, "a teaching moment" if you will. The grand lesson is – look not at the description and pedigree of a piece, but at the piece itself.

And as you look, you will notice not only that many an after-cast of a great medal is thoroughly unappetizing, and has no power to attract at all, nonetheless there are instances when a clearly non-“original,” “late,” “poor” medal may nevertheless have great artistic merit. Moreover, even in the technically best example of a medal, this merit may be present in only one aspect of it. In the very same piece, a portrait may be good, but the lettering poor; the obverse fine, but not the reverse. And when seeking out an acceptable piece, it hardly makes sense to demand technical excellence in those aspects of the medal in which artistic excellence is lacking.

To be attractive, a medal does not need to be sharp “throughout,” but only where it matters. Ignore poor quality in casting of lettering where in the finest of examples that lettering is merely ugly. Forget about indistinct reverse where you wouldn’t want to look at it even if it were exceptionally sharp. In collecting Renaissance medals, bending the rules should be the main rule; adhering to “standards” should not be. Sacrificing quality of that which has no real quality anyway, is no lowering of standards at all. A “bad” piece may after all be quite all right.



**[Lev -- this is a truly outstanding piece!!—  
Ed.]**

## Letters to Editor

Good Morning John,

I hope you had a good weekend! It was good to see you at the ANS Gala and the NYINC. I have a question about a medal I just found in a drawer. It is a US Grant Medal, about the size of a quarter, copper, Grant's portrait surrounded by "Ulysses S Grant". The reverse has what I believe is the city seal of Philadelphia surrounded in two lines with this legend:

"STRUCK AND DISTRIBUTED IN  
THE MUNICIPAL PARADE  
BY THE EMPLOYES OF THE US MINT  
Phila. Dec. 16, 1879"

Yes, EMPLOYES was misspelled on the medal. This is all I could find out about the parade:

December 16. Grand public reception of general U.S. Grant upon his return to Philadelphia and the conclusion of his journey around the world. military and civic procession which required four hours and 40 minutes to pass a given point. It was 6-1/2 miles in length, and was estimated to have been participated in by 40,000 persons and seen by 350,000 spectators.

Can you tell me anything about this? Is it scarce/common. I don't collect anything this new and was considering placing it on ebay for \$20 to start, but if it has no value or is very valuable, I might do something different.

Thanks,

Ray Williams

John,

I'm away from home, but I'm pretty sure this item is about the size of a hard times token and is brass. if I'm not mistaken, it is a U.S. Mint medal listed in Julian and there were a monumental number of them struck. I believe it is very common, probably worth in the \$20-40 range depending on condition, but Joe

Levine would be a better judge of that. EBay might be the best way to go.

John Sallay

Hi Ray,

From your excellent description, the piece is Julian's CM-18: "On December 2, 1879, the director of the mint gave his permission for the employees of the mint to be in a parade honoring former President Grant. The medals were actually struck in brass during the parade and passed out to the crowds along the way. They were never sold by the mint. The number struck is unknown, but may have exceeded 10,000 pieces." Kudos to you for the question and to John Sallay for the answer.

My best,

John W. Adams

Good Morning,

I was reading "The Numismatist" and saw the article on page 23. I have a ROTY medal and have taken it to shows and even contacted a descendant of Roty to find out more about it.

Perhaps you could fill in the blanks. It is shown in the collection sections of Roty Foundation, listed in the article.

It is the medal celebrating 100 years of the Bank of France. I would like to know when it was made, how many produced, what metals, historical info, etc.....

I would appreciate any help you can provide.

Thanks,

Scott Vogel

## Roty Medals Important

I am not an expert on foreign medals. It would be far better to ask, say, French medal authority Richard Margolis, for more information on this medal. However since I was asked I will chime in with my comments.

Asking the quantity struck for a medal tells us far more about the inquirer than one might imagine. It is of less importance to a medal collector than a coin collector. Since coin collectors start collecting (generally) filling albums with quantity struck printed under the port holes, or reading the Red Book with quantity struck on every line, this subject is imbedded in every coin collectors' psyche. Not so for medal collectors.

A million quantity struck of a circulating coin might be considered rare. A medal with a quantity struck of one million would flood the market for decades.

Identifying the date of the medal in question is easy. Wikipedia states the Bank of France was established in January 1800. Thus a centennial medal would be issued in 1900. This fits in with Roty's work, he was very active at that time. He was probably commissioned to create this medal a year or two in advance of the centennial year.

In 1910 the American Numismatic Society held an international exhibition of medallic art, inviting artists from all over the world to exhibit in New York City. Of the 194 American and foreign artists who exhibited Louis Oscar Roty showed more than any other artist -- 83 pieces! That tells you somewhat of his importance. Second in number of pieces on exhibit was Roty's student, American Victor David Brenner with 69 pieces.

Roty's Bank of France Medal was not included. Don't read too much into that. Perhaps he thought it would not be of that great of interest to American viewers. Or it was too commercial. Or for whatever reason, he had been so productive up to that time he had hundreds of medals to choose from.

I do have a suggestion for collector Scott Vogel--make this medal the keystone for a new collecting specialty, add to it! Roty made a medal with the female figure "The Sower." Buy that medal. Then Roty was commissioned to prepare a coin design. He choose "The Sower" again and it appeared of French coins. Acquire some of those coins for an interesting association between coins and medals.

Finally, I mentioned V.D. Benner was Roty's student. Brenner modified Roty's Sower and submitted that as his first choice for the reverse design of the Lincoln Cent when he was commission to create a new coin design. This design was not accepted but illustrations of that design have been pictured in books. Get a photocopy of that illustration.

Now Scott, you have the basis of a prize-winning exhibit. How, perhaps, a Bank medal led to the creation of a coin design. And the tie-in to the American Lincoln Cent. Wow! Or should I exclaim "*Viola!*" You just won a blue ribbon at the next coin show!

Dick Johnson

Dear John

What is it about collectors that they have lost the ability and need to touch? Everything now needs to be encapsulated and the drive towards that end leaves the joy of collecting far behind. Even comic books are now sealed in plastic and graded on a scale of 10. But then, glory be, there on pages 12 and 13 of the February MCA Advisory, is the wonderful George Bullock cabinet.

This cabinet has to have been made for Matthew Robinson Boulton, son of the great Matthew Boulton, who ordered volumes of furniture from Bullock, much of it in oak and holly, Bullock's 40+ page invoice still exists and it would be worth checking. The cabinet was not included in the Christie sale of the contents of Boulton's house at Great Tew on the 27th - 29th May, 1987. I would guess the

sizes in the pierced trays would fit Soho mint products and might explain why there are not all that many spaces.

Only the small matter of \$275,000 prevents me from rushing to buy the cabinet. In the meantime I think there is plenty of scope for Anthony Stuenkel to do some further research.

Kind regards

Daniel Fearon

Dear Dave [Bowers],

I wonder if you can help. For a long time I have tried, unsuccessfully, to find the sculptor and or the engraver of a medal I have and cherish. I have a bronze and silver specimen of the 1907 Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition Medal.

I have found facts, but not these facts from articles that are on the internet and in the "So-called Dollar Book" my local coin dealer shared with me. The Pocahontas obverse & ship reverse are beautiful but not credited. Even in an article from "Numismatist Magazine," it told more of the Exposition than of the medal. If you could help I would really be thankful.

Sincere regards,

John A. Mead  
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**[Thank you, Dave, for steering John's inquiry our way. Ed.]**

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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What are your collecting interests?

What would you see highlighted in MCA publications?

### QUESTIONNAIRE

How did you learn about the MCA?

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